

SUBJECT: A PROPOSAL FOR A "CHALLENGE MECHANISM" FOR
THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

Introductory Note: This paper looks at the feasibility of institutionalizing a "challenge mechanism," or "Devil's Advocate," as it has been termed, in the Intelligence Community. The paper does not proceed with a full discussion of the pros and cons of formally institutionalizing challenge. Rather, it seeks to explore the working milieu in which an institutionalized challenge mechanism would have to function. This should enable interested parties to come to some conclusions about the feasibility of the concept. Our method has been to solicit the views of individuals who formerly held, or hold now, key managerial positions in substantive intelligence-producing organizations, and NIOs, and to let their views speak for themselves. We have concentrated on these individuals since we sought to emphasize feasibility of challenge in practice, and these folk are critical to the success or failure of the process. Finally, although sentiment of those reached runs rather heavily against institutionalizing challenge, a large number of possible ways to do just that are set out for possible consideration.

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I. WHY A CHALLENGE MECHANISM?

The concept was first advanced by the D/DCI/IC in a memorandum for the DCI which may be found at TAB A.

Briefly, in that memorandum, the notion was advanced that a "Devil's Advocate" would be useful in forcing a close look at major judgments, and the possibility of institutionalizing that role should be examined.

An unstated but clear implication of that proposal was that in the preparation of major substantive papers, such as NIEs and InterAgency Memoranda, at least some key

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minority views were not being ventilated to the fullest extent, that other views were or could be overlooked, or that important contingencies might not receive full attention.*

In looking into that hypothesis, it was thought useful to compare production and particularly the review process for estimative papers as it obtained in the former Office of National Estimates (ONE) and as it is now under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officers (NIOs).

Briefly, in O/NE there were several levels of reviews built into the normal production process:

a) Drafts were initially reviewed by the Staff Chief in a regional/functional staff. Some, but not all, regional/functional staffs held rather searching internal reviews of drafts which provided an opportunity for other in-staff views, before forwarding papers to the O/NE front office;

b) Normally when sending the draft paper to O/NE front office, copies were sent to other offices in CIA with an interest in the paper requesting informal comments;

c) The Board of National Estimates considered the draft. Normally, there were a variety of views on a paper, with one or more Board members acting in fact as a

*This paper excludes looking at a challenge mechanism in the warning arena. Suffice it to say, all the difficulties associated with challenge, but particularly that of timing, are even more intense in a situation of crisis and very severe time constraints.

Devil's Advocate. Indeed, the role of the Board was to probe and question the entire paper. In these sessions, representatives from other CIA offices were included, and their views were heard;

d) Next, representatives of the USIB agencies met; in addition, representatives of the various CIA offices of interest also attended these sessions as back-benchers;

e) USIB considered the paper.

There were two other devices used by O/NE to offer the opportunity for dissenting views to be ventilated. Staff Memoranda were not infrequently produced by O/NE analysts which, in effect, said, "Yes, most of the Community thinks the situation in Ruritania is progressing along a certain path, but here are some very good reasons why it could go quite another." After consideration by the Board, ONE made a judicious distribution of these memoranda.

Another device was to present key estimates to a prestigious group of consultants at tri-monthly meetings at Princeton. Consultant comments and a lively give-and-take ensued on some papers. [] comment seems to be a generally-held reaction. "The old O/NE consultants were not very effective" (the knock is not against those particular consultants but rather on the difficulty of bringing outside consultants "up to speed" with respect to

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given situations).

Under the present system, where the NIO subcontracts a paper for drafting to some element of a USIB agency, the levels of review are fewer. For example, if a draft is produced by an analyst in O/CI or DIA's Directorate for Estimates it goes directly to the NIO. To the degree the NIO reshapes it there is a review, and the NIO can, of course, act to challenge all or any portion of the paper. Also, the NIO can establish some kind of ad hoc group to review a paper. Infrequently, as in the case of NIE 11-15-74, a 'Committee of Experts' looks at the draft. Normally, however, after his own review, the NIO would send the draft to the USIB representatives for their consideration (item d. under previous O/NE procedure). In practice, therefore, the levels of review are numerically less than before, and to the extent one NIO can review a paper (vice a panel of senior officers as in O/NE), given time and other pressures, the quality of review may not be as profound as before.

The concept of the "noninstitutional draft," while perhaps healthy for other reasons, also probably inhibits the amount and degree of 'Devil's Advocating' that existed previously. Specifically, if the NIO levies a draft on DIA, and makes it clear that he seeks the drafter's views--not the so-called "DIA pitch"--he will get that drafter's views, if DIA or OCI or whoever is drafter, plays the game.

But if DIA plays the game squarely, neither will the NIO get the kind of quality control within DIA that he would if DIA were producing a formal paper under its byline. The NIO will get the best effort of the drafter, affected to some degree by the advice of his colleagues, but he will not get a paper which has undergone searching review and questioning--DIA will reserve that for the USIB representatives meeting or, in extremis, for the USIB meeting itself. Certainly, the draft will not undergo a very close review comparable to papers moving through the O/NE production process.

Another relevant factor arises as a result of the demise of O/NE drafting responsibilities, which might be termed the "current intelligence syndrome." Under the current arrangement the bulk of all papers prepared under NIO auspices must be produced by substantive organizations geared in the main, toward producing current intelligence. These include: CIA/OCI, State/INR, and DIA/DI (in these three organizations are found the bulk of the Community analysts capable of producing finished national intelligence drafts). CIA/OSR and CIA/OER are to a somewhat lesser extent also much concerned with production for current publications. Only DIA/DE lacks current intelligence responsibilities among the several organizations on which the NIO must draw for drafting support.

There may be a weakness in a system that relies heavily on current intelligence analysts to also prepare estimative and longer-range judgments, at least in the sense of reducing the opportunities for other views to impact on current wisdom. This problem, i.e., the weight of the current intelligence apparatus, was adverted to in a memorandum prepared recently by a senior NIC analyst. She was considering the warning function specifically, but her point may have a wider validity.

" The fact is that the current intelligence structure in each agency--with such assistance as it may require from other specialists such as order of battle analysts, economists or scientific experts--virtually has a monopoly on the daily and weekly intelligence production effort which flows to the intelligence chiefs, policy officials, military commanders, and the White House. Each day, the agency and often the Community position is established on critical current issues as they are set forth in the daily publications and briefings Not surprisingly, once these items have been disseminated, there is the strongest resistance in every agency to the dissemination of any differing interpretation, whether produced by warning analysts or anyone else. "

The question can be reasonably asked whether the current intelligence analyst is the best person to make the longer-range assessment, but even if he is, the larger problem may be that longer-range estimative and assessment papers may be (perhaps unconsciously) reflecting current intelligence wisdom. This vulnerability is enhanced by

the levels of questioning having been reduced (the point being made is that levels of review, if properly handled, offer opportunities for adversary views to be exposed, not merely that levels of review are useful, per se). One NIO pointed out that "while under the NIO system schematically the opportunities (for review) had been reduced, "that was not really the case." He pointed out that on CIA drafts he conducted an "in-house CIA review" prior to issuing the paper for the USIB representatives meeting. However, he also noted that this was not done in all cases by any means.

Hence, on the grounds not only of the original suggestion by D/DCI/IC, but because several review levels had been eliminated with the demise of O/NE, plus the possibility that current intelligence views might be so dominant in production that the content of longer-range papers might be affected, we decided to explore the working milieu in which an institutionalized challenge mechanism of some sort would have to function.

II. VIEWS ON THE WORKING MILIEU FOR A CHALLENGE MECHANISM

The concept of institutionalizing a challenge mechanism aroused considerable skepticism and doubt as to its effectiveness and utility from nearly all those with whom it was discussed, both current and former practitioners.

It should be noted that this pessimism appears to be rooted in experience and practical problems that face substantive intelligence producers and managers. There is no reason to believe that it is simply blind opposition, although practical bureaucratic considerations have some impact.

Before examining some of the reasons for doubt over institutionalizing dissent described by those reached in the survey, an important point must be made. That is, all believe very much in dissent, adversary procedures, devil's advocacy and the like, as a necessary and integral part of the process of producing good intelligence. But virtually all also are substantially in accord with the view of a former DDI who puts it this way, " . . . dissenting views can most effectively be dealt with at the working level of review, indeed as early as possible in the production process." A former Assistant Deputy of O/NE contends, "A kind of Devil's Advocate should be part of the process in working up a paper through the working substantive levels . . . it is all part of the 'tightening process' in producing any paper." A current manager says, "the way to achieve this (introducing alternatives to main conclusions) is to get these new attitudes inculcated in all the producing divisions so that various and differing views are surfaced normally through the regular production mechanism."

Thus, the strong inclination is to insist that differing views and judgments can best be threshed out by the analysts and producing offices, rather than by another entity or group organized and tasked specifically to prepare opposing views. This means that at each step along the way, drafters, branch and division chiefs, other offices, and colleagues in other agencies should continually question judgments. Clearly, the producers feel that, as professionals, taking account of differing views and contingencies is simply part and parcel of producing rounded, substantive papers. And normally this is sufficient--as the AD/DCI/NIO put it, "the Intelligence Community is right most of the time."

Other practical reasons were advanced against institutionalizing a challenge mechanism, and they are set out below.

1) New Procedures. Under the new procedures now in effect, a very considerable effort is made to build dissenting views into the text, and this goes some distance to meet the problem. Interestingly, both a former DDI and [] regard this as a cosmetic touch (though both oppose institutionalizing the challenge mechanism);

2) Types of Papers. The AD/DCI/NIO stresses that a number of papers, such as the enormously complex and detailed NIE 11-3/8-74, "do not lend themselves to

Devil's Advocating." Of course, certain portions could be selected out for special treatment. But it would be very difficult to challenge the estimate as a whole. Other papers where there is a deficiency of information or the information is ambiguous, could be challenged much easier.

3) DCI Responsibility. The AD/DCI/NIO makes the point that the DCI is charged with presenting an estimative judgment to the President of the most likely developments in given situations. In this connection, he believes that having laid out our best judgment (with suitable space for dissent in the text), it would be "terribly confusing" to readers to find another view set out at annex (as suggested in paragraph 4, TAB A). An NIO asked, "What can you do after the Devil's Advocate cites another position-- simply ask the policymaker to worry about it?," "even though we have no basis for conceding" that the DA assessment is indeed the correct one. Still another NIO: the "Devil's Advocate would quickly run out of steam with his analytical colleagues" since "all analysts work from the same jam pot of evidence the DA doesn't have anything (other than his opinion) to impress his analytical colleagues."

4) Deadlines. The point is made that not infrequently important papers must be prepared for the NSC on very tight deadlines. One manager says, "When you

have 48 hours to draft, hone, and print a paper for the NSC, you can't allot 24 of those hours to a Devil's Advocate to attack your paper--you have to use every possible minute to get the paper produced."

The concept of a Devil's Advocate is also criticized on grounds of artificiality. A former Assistant Deputy of O/NE claims that in his experience the "DA role drives an individual to take increasingly extreme positions, partly because he and everyone else knows that he is role-playing" and this contributes to an essentially artificial situation. A former DDI believes that, while a DA should not be institutionalized, the "philosophy of a DA should be established so that it permeates the working levels of intelligence production." A current manager is seeking to make progress in this direction by encouraging his analysts "if necessary to manufacture other alternatives to their main conclusions." But he too believes this is best accomplished by pushing this approach through the regular production mechanisms.

Interestingly, this manager thinks the culture in which the analyst works makes familiarity and ease in which differing views are surfaced hard to come by. He put it this way: An analyst is flooded with information from many sources and then literally urged to make judgments and come to conclusions. Having done that he is forced to defend those judgments up the line. Once he gets his views set, and

once he has defended them a number of times, it is very difficult to get the analyst to accept other differing views.

Another knotty problem involves the best timing in using a challenge mechanism for best results. Some believe a DA could be useful before a paper is written, say in an "oral contributions" meeting. Others contend that the service would be chiefly useful once a draft is prepared (this seems to make the most sense if the timing is suitable). Still others would apply the challenge mechanism concurrently with the paper (perhaps as an annex as mentioned in the memorandum at TAB A) or once a paper is produced. A Departmental Special Assistant for National Security suggests that the option to levy a Devil's Advocate study on any given paper constitutes part of the pre-USIB briefing process for the DCI. The Special Assistant believes the DCI is uniquely situated to determine whether a challenge to a paper should be instituted. But views are mixed; Ambassador Komer believes this would be too late to be helpful.

Behind all of the various doubts raised about the effectiveness of a challenge mechanism of any kind, is the very touchy problem of the controversy that is nearly certain to envelop any such body. The retired professionals make no bones about this as a fundamental consideration. One commented that, whoever runs the NIOs would seek to "do in"

this group. A former DDI said such a group would "quickly become highly controversial" and even a "high-powered" review board "probably can't be located in the bureaucracy." Another thought it "might be done once," as George Ball did on Vietnam in the State Department, but would not work in general.

Understandably, perhaps to avoid appearing negative, current managers did not volunteer comments on this point. One NIO who opines that he "likes the idea of a DA in certain instances," still believes it should not be institutionalized "in the usual sense." He believes "that if it were localized in, say, the Office of Political Research of CIA, or on the IC Staff, the people doing the job would quickly wear out their welcome; moreover, they would also tire of constantly acting as scolds to the Community, a very unrewarding function." The further point is made that "hostility brought down on these offices" through the challenge function would make it harder for them to carry out their other missions.

While this consideration might be termed a mere "bureaucratic problem," in the sense of organizational positioning, in essence it reaches far beyond that. It touches the matter of the size of an organization conducting the challenge (on this more later) and the crucial consideration of acceptability within the Community. An NIO said, "anyone acting as a Devil's Advocate would have to have the proper credentials as a knowledgeable individual in whatever area was under discussion."

A manager claims that "if set apart from the regular working levels, the Devil's Advocate would have to have some of the attributes of a god," and wondered who could really meet the standards. Even with highly suitable credentials all who chose to comment agreed that controversy would be endemic to the challenge mechanism.

While the credentials of the "challengers" was cited as a critical factor, skepticism was still expressed about the chances that even a "high-powered" review group could be effective. In part, this concerns the comments on page 10, "What should policymakers do? - worry?" It also relates to the difficulty in overturning the views of a large bureaucracy, with officers steeped in the detail of the daily traffic by a small group.

The NIC staffer writes (after commenting on the people and resources of the current intelligence shops), "There is simply no way that a small group of indications specialists (read Devil's Advocates) can compete or really get an equal hearing when they may be in disagreement." She also acknowledges, "After all, the area specialists are not often very wrong and usually are able to offer impressive numbers of facts and persuasive arguments for their conclusions. Day in and day out, the odds are that the area specialists will be right" and "no group of this type (warning but equally

applicable to challenge) can hope to duplicate the research of the current intelligence shops worldwide and keep a knowledgeable watch on every potential adverse development." Ambassador Komer is more blunt: the people who follow the day-to-day traffic can "kill" any such review group, overwhelm it with data. And a former DDI is equally clear, "A body or small group set off from the working level analysts would be overwhelmed by the amount of facts and details that those working on a subject daily are able to bring to bear to support their case." And there is grave doubt expressed by most of the retired professionals that external consultants would have sufficient familiarity with the world scene to be an effective counter.

In a related view touching on the utility of a challenge mechanism, a former senior intelligence official sees some danger in the production of a dissenting view following an NIE. For example, after a Community view has been hammered out, a dissenting paper (apart from dissents registered in the estimate itself) would offer those pushing a "worst case" view a new opportunity to "merchandise their views to policy-makers." The D/DCI/NIO sees this as "confusing" policymakers. An NIO thought "it would be a mistake to publish any sort of Devil's Advocate paper."

In considering the foregoing, an observer must conclude there are vastly different perceptions at work with respect

to the challenge mechanism. One is that held by the former D/DCI/IC, who authored the paper at TAB A. For example, he views his actions over the years in repeatedly and consistently sounding a warning of potential Sino-Soviet warfare as a positive service to the policymaker. No matter that the judgment did not prove out (or at least has not in the period 1967-74).

Others charged with providing estimative papers to the policymakers focus on the need essentially to provide correct judgments (with suitable dissents and uncertainty made clear to the President and policymakers generally). These folk see the emphasizing of the minority view as a confusing element, if not an outright disservice to the policymaker. They consistently came back to the point--in the words of an NIO, "But the judgment on the Sino-Soviet struggle was flatly wrong." Much thus depends upon your point of view: Should the DA sound the tocsin or is the game to estimate correctly (with due consideration for uncertainty).

Perhaps a way out is suggested by a former O/NE official. He opines: "An estimate or substantive paper should come down hard, as hard as the evidence permits, on a judgment, and it should be as pointed and precise as possible. But in those instances where the outcome on the other side of the majority position would be very serious to US interests, then a "worst case analysis" should be undertaken. A kind of

'if we are wrong . . . then thus and so will happen . . . '

This would be a very thorough study of the implications of being wrong." But he views this as very different from, and much more important than, an institutionalized challenge mechanism. A former DDI lends some support to this approach. He believes that if the concept of a challenge mechanism has any merit, "it is probably in those cases where the minority view occurrence, should it take place, would have very serious consequences for the U.S." In these circumstances, he thinks the DCI might request that a post-NIE paper might be produced, though it should be a very closely held document.

It is apparent that among those polled, few envisage the successful institutionalization of a challenge mechanism. It is equally clear that there would be rather considerable bureaucratic turbulence and resistance (possibly much of it subconscious) from other producing elements should a review entity be devised.

III. POSSIBLE CHALLENGE MECHANISMS - SIZE AND LOCATION

Nevertheless, the DCI must decide whether a challenge mechanism would suit him and his operating style. In part, it would depend upon his confidence in his producers. Is he confident that the working procedures in fact permit, indeed encourage, the surfacing of divergent judgments?

Is the bureaucratic resistance to a challenge mechanism that really has some clout worthwhile if it can also provide the DCI additional assurance that the best intelligence is being produced?

If it is decided by Higher Authority that some sort of challenge mechanism is desired, questions of organization and location, touched on previously, become immediate. Below are sketched out some of the options in very general terms. While we have introduced some of the pros and cons, and qualifiers, with respect to these options, the following is not meant as an exhaustive treatment. Our main conclusion is, perhaps predictably, in the spectrum of possibilities, the ones least likely to have a real impact on the substantive community are generally the ones most acceptable to the producing managers, that is, they are disposed to accept them and work with them.

Considerations of size, location, and rank (of the office or individual) are closely intermingled. Possible challenge mechanisms include:

--- A single, very impressive individual, wordly, perhaps a scholar or well thought of retired Ambassador or public figure. He would be situated in the DCI's immediate office and would enjoy very close working relations with him. Another proposal would envisage a slightly less formidable figure

with NIO status and located in that complex.

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[redacted] and others think that it would not be feasible to place the function in the office of

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the D/DCI/NIO - [redacted] feels the individual would have to have at least equivalent rank with D/DCI/NIO.

--- Three or four very impressive and knowledgeable figures--functioning as a Senior Review Board and attached to the O/DCI and with very close, continuing access to him.

--- An ad hoc "challenger." A different individual on each major paper perhaps selected by the NIO from anywhere in the Intelligence Community. One suggestion is that this individual should be a high ranking substantive officer, e.g., D/OCI or the Deputy DDI, pulled off his normal duties for a period of 2 - 3 weeks to immerse himself in the subject. Clearly this latter proposal carries with it severe practical difficulties (as do all the rest).

--- The NIO could conduct his own challenge though it is acknowledged to be difficult to, in effect, act as a DA against one's own paper.

--- The Program Review Division (PRD) of the IC Staff. This element already has a product review mission and has some substantive capability. (But see earlier comments, page 13, which indicate this could hurt other IC Staff functions.)

--- Office of Political Research (OPR), CIA.

Contains much of the former O/NE Staff - good analytic and critical staff. (Also see comments, page 13.)

--- A new office--equal in size to the NIO structure.

STAT believes that to offset the other large analytic staffs, "any adversary group must be of the same size as the NIO set-up, including clerical assistance." He goes on to say: "If it were not of adequate size, the DA would be working on while some other crisis was emerging. The DA would miss the new crisis and criticism would fall on him. Everyone would say, 'We have a DA, why wasn't he watching out for this crisis?'"

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Also, "any review group would need to have access to the vast amount of intelligence material available to the analysts," and this translates to a fairly large staff even to review only selected papers and issues. Comments on pages 14/⁻¹⁵ are pertinent. Probably located in the O/DCI.

--- Ad hoc consultants on given subjects. They would require access to all the intelligence and be asked to prepare the challenge case. This would require a fairly leisurely production schedule, unless the

challenge were undertaken after a substantive paper was issued. These consultants could be responsible to the O/DCI, NIO, IC Staff or elsewhere.

--- Panels of two to three consultants--experts in given areas, available to come to Washington on call, "almost as for jury duty." The author of this proposal admits to grave difficulties in achieving this kind of consultant constancy and response. Those who experienced the old O/NE consultant arrangement are skeptical over consultant arrangements generally. A former DDI, still in the Washington area and immersed in a think-tank milieu does not feel he can stay current and doubts that others from academe can either. Organizational link as above.

Another suggestion which is generally acceptable to all would be the selection of a topic or two with an experimental DA. This has been done three times already, in one form or another. As noted in the case described in TAB A, it was judged to have "helped to stimulate discussion." A Devil's Advocate view was also propounded in connection with NIAM 11-9-74, Soviet Detente Policy. The NIO concerned thought the presentation by a knowledgeable PRD/IC Staff analyst had caused him "to look at a particular proposition more closely, though it did not much change the NIAM."

In another effort, the AD/ACDA challenged the Intelligence Community's ability to monitor Soviet compliance with the SAL on offensive missiles, and lobbied for analysts to join him in a DA role, as a full-time occupation. Analysts at the meeting "objected that such a group would soon be discredited as a bunch of cranks."

It is open to question whether additional experimentation would make the utility of a challenge mechanism more or less clear cut. In any event, many of the problems involved in the institutionalization of challenge would simply be delayed until it became clear whether the DCI was going to take that vital step.

Finally, whatever form the challenge mechanism took, the question of timing--when it went into action--would still be a very difficult one. It should probably evolve after a number of experiments. One point seems clear, that the challenge mechanism should probably be employed sparingly and only on very major issues.

In conclusion, as one of the pros said, the institution of a DA is not so important as the philosophy in producing substantive intelligence. Or as one S. Kent said many years ago (in reflecting on the substantive problem in strategic intelligence):

"The only answer lies in picking a man who already knows a good deal about the substantive area

in which he is supposed to ask questions, and who has an inquiring mind; and then see to it that he has ready access to every scrap of new incoming evidence on it, access to everyone who knows about it, and freedom from other burdensome duties."

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INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED DURING THE STUDY

RETIRED PROFESSIONALS

Ray Cline



Chet Cooper


CURRENT MANAGERS

George Carver

Hank Knoche



NIOs



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2 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: The Devil's Advocate

1. On 13 December, as a result of a discussion I had with the D/DCI/NIO, one of my staff served as Devil's Advocate (DA) during a Community-wide gathering of analysts on China. The DA argued that the likelihood of Soviet-initiated hostilities against China is greater than the Intelligence Community currently estimates. This is in line with the notion of establishing more effective challenge mechanisms in the production of intelligence. ✓

2. The DA argued along these lines:

--The Intelligence Community has a tendency to downplay the likelihood of hostilities--e.g., prior to the most recent Arab-Israeli war.

--The Soviets probably seriously considered initiating hostilities in 1969, and having done so once they might do so again, and decide differently.

--The Intelligence Community's predictions since 1969 that the Soviets have virtually completed their buildup near the Chinese border have been erroneous and misleading. Part of the problem is that the Community tends to look at evidence in a preconceived way. For instance, a new Soviet corps headquarters identified in January 1973 is viewed as the tail end of a buildup rather than as the beginning of a new buildup--as a corps headquarters proved to be in November 1965; and a new division, overlooked when the September 1973 NIE 11-13-73 was completed, is counted only reluctantly (it is said that the division equipment may only be there for storage purposes).

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--The Intelligence Community tends to equate the Soviet military planners' views of the feasibility of a nuclear exchange with China with a U.S. military planner's view of the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance, which can be a misleading parallel.

--In Annex C of the September 1973 NIE, it is said that "the Soviets would calculate the chances of a Chinese retaliatory strike as slight" if the Soviets struck first with their nuclear weapons; yet the implications of this judgment are not really applied to the rest of the NIE.

--The Intelligence Community has a preconception that the Soviet leadership makes difficult foreign policy decisions on the basis of a moderate compromise; that is, the way Western cabinets tend to operate. But it may be that when the Soviet leadership postpones decisions for a considerable period, the ultimate decision will be impulsive, incautious, interventionist.

--There are three contingencies which could easily converge and increase the attractiveness to Moscow of military action against China: (1) the Chinese could draw close to, but still lack both an effective tactical nuclear missile capability, and the capability of striking the Soviet heartland with strategic missiles; (2) the departure of Mao or Chou or both could occur soon with one side in subsequent internal power struggle turning to an outside power, the USSR, for help; (3) the Soviets could perceive that the U.S. is less able now to react to a Sino-Soviet war than it has been in the past or will be in the future.

3. The DA believes that presentation of a "coherent" (not his term but that of one of the other participants) case helped to stimulate discussion. The question now is: how can DA roles be institutionalized? One approach would involve the designation, by the NIO in charge of drafting a major paper, of someone who would review previous papers on the subject in order to find loopholes. That is, even if the major judgments in the NIEs

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have proven correct in the past, there usually are certain minor judgments which have been overtaken by events. It would be the DA's role to highlight these weaknesses with a view toward forcing a fresh examination of the major judgments.

4. I recognize that the new brand of NIEs encourages the coherent statement of dissent in the text, rather than fragmentarily in small footnotes. It may be that in many cases dissenting agencies will in effect perform the DA function. But particularly for those NIEs which have passed unanimously year after year, it might be helpful to create the DA's "artificial" dissent. This might be put at annex to the paper, clearly labelled as an artificial position.

5. In principle, these procedures could also be used in producing memoranda. DA positions could be solicited from other agencies. Or, to save time, and damage to bureaucratic feelings, someone within the producing agency could fill the role.

6. These are only preliminary notions. As you know, as a follow up to our recommendations in the Post-Mortem Report on the Middle East, my staff is working up a more detailed set of proposals for establishing challenge mechanisms. Meanwhile, I believe the DA concept is worth further experimentation.

[REDACTED]
Daniel O. Graham
Major General, USA
D/DCI/IC

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Not artificial in the sense of
not being in line with the tendency,
of course, but in the sense that the
Doubt's Advocate may inject against the
"unbalanced" view of the majority-

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Wilson

Herewith a clean copy of the
challenge mechanism paper for DCI if you
choose to send him one.

13 Jan 75

(DATE)

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